

**HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW
RICHLAND COUNTY DSS
SEPTEMBER 2001**

At the request of the Richland County DSS Director, the South Carolina Department of Social Services Human Services Division conducted a qualitative review of Richland County DSS in Fall 2001.

The review was conducted on site, and consisted of case record reviews, staff interviews, client contacts, and external stakeholder interviews. In this review, the external stakeholders interviewed were foster parents, the Guardian ad litem, Foster Care Review Board, and the Administrative Family Court Judge. We also were provided the Richland County DSS performance planning document developed in September 2000.

It must be noted that the review which generated the findings in this section was conducted in September 2001 and sampled case activity from January through August 2001. Since that time, the Agency has implemented a new computer system (CAPSS).

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SAMPLE INFORMATION

Program under review	Referrals Not Accepted As CPS Reports	CPS Investigation	CPS Treat. - Active	CPS Treat. - Closed	Foster Care - Active	Foster Care - Closed	Foster Home Licensing
Period Under Review	6/01/01 - 8/31/01	4/01/01 - 6/30/01	8/31/01	6/01/01- 8/31/01	8/31/01	6/01/01 - 8/31/01	8/31/01
Case Population for Period Under Review	44	377	328	102	234	85	98
Cases Sampled	20	25	25	20	25	20	20
Cases Reviewed	20	25	25	20	25	20	20

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MEASURES AND OUTPUTS**

Outcome 1: Increase permanency for children in Foster Care (Safe and Stable Home for Every Child)

Measure	Source	County		State	
		#	%	#	%
Total Children in Care	SACWIS	385	100%	4862	100%
Children in care more than 12 months	SACWIS	237	61.56%	3052	62.77%
In care more than 12 months where permanency hearing has not been held	SACWIS	92	38.82%	1044	34.21%
Children in care for whom permanency plan has not been achieved within 3/6 months after permanency planning hearing	SACWIS	Report under development			

Summary: While data is not readily available concerning the achievement of permanency plans, the lack of involvement of the family or the child in planning, and a superficial evaluation of case progress are major factors in this outcome. The frequent judicial reviews and consent orders which occur raise questions about the permanency hearing not held numbers. We noted documentation problems and delays in updating the computer system which may account for this discrepancy. Richland DSS has the structure in place which has the potential to enable achievement of this outcome, after case evaluation and client participation are addressed.

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Outcome 2: Reduce Time in Foster Care to Adoption

Measure	County		State	
	#	Months	#	Months
Average number of months in foster care until adoption is final	1	20.99	469	46.40
Average number of days/months in foster care after permanency planning hearing approves a plan of TPR or adoption for the child	Report under development			
Average number of days/months in foster care after TPR is granted	Report under development			

Summary: Delays in systems updates make this figure questionable.

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Outcome 3: Improve Child Well-Being

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number and percentage of children and adolescents attending school and performing: passing grades, maintaining grade level, school readiness (1 st), truancy, suspensions/expulsions, literacy, diploma/GED, secondary education	In the 15 cases reviewed where Foster Children were in school, we found that all were on grade level, and 12 cases (80%) were attending school and exhibiting no attendance or behavior problems.			
Number and percentage of children and adolescents who show physical and mental health is stable or improving (therapy, screenings)	In the 25 cases reviewed, we found that the 18 children identified with mental health or adjustment issues were actively receiving therapy or counseling.			
Number and percentage of children with substance abuse are stable or improving	In the 25 cases reviewed, we found that the 2 children identified with substance abuse issues were actively receiving therapy or counseling.			
Number and percentage of runaways	18	4.68%	95	1.95%
Number and percentage who age out of foster care and failed to meet goals	Report under development			
Number and percentage who become pregnant	In the 25 cases reviewed, we found no children who either became pregnant or fathered a child.			
Number and percentage who are adjudicated for delinquency: once, more than once.	In the 25 cases reviewed, we found that 3(12%) children were involved with delinquency issues.			

Summary: Based on case reviews, children in foster care in Richland are generally experiencing few problems with school, behavior, or substance abuse. The Independent Living cases reviewed did not document a realistic case plan to prepare the child for leaving foster care.

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Outcome 4: Reduce Time in Foster Care to Reunification Without Increasing Re-entry

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number and percentage of children who show physical and mental health stability and/or improvement	Based on our review of 25 Foster Care cases and caseworker interviews, 9 (64.29%) of the 14 foster children with assessed physical or mental health issues were not receiving treatment.			
Number and percentage of parents with substance abuse who are stable and/or improving	Report under development			
Average number of family/relative visits per child per month (parents, other relatives)	Of the 15 Foster Care cases reviewed where visitation was part of the case plan, 8 cases had regular visitation occurring on an average of once every two months.			
Number of children who return to foster care after reunification within 12 months	22	7.21%	201	8.72%

Summary: Our case review indicated visitation as an issue where the the visit was arranged but did not occur, usually due to the parent or relative not attending. In these instances, there was little evidence of followup with the parent or relative to address the need for visitation or reasons for not attending.

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Outcome 5: Reduce Placements of Young Children in Group Homes or Institutions (Federal Requirements)

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Percentage of children age 12 years and below placed in group homes or institutions	25	9.19%	272	100%

Summary: Richland DSS is taking the age of the child into consideration when arranging placements, by considering the availability of individual foster homes first. The lack of available spaces in individual foster homes occasionally precludes placement of siblings together unless in a group home or institution.

Outcome 6: Reduce/Prevent Abuse of Children in Foster Care

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number of children in foster care with substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff person	21	21.43%	98	100%

Summary: Richland DSS has initiated regular telephone and face-to-face contacts with foster parents by foster home licensing staff. The visits with foster children, however, are not clearly documenting an ongoing assessment of the child's safety.

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Outcome 7: Increase Stability of Placements and Other Aspects of Foster Children's Lives

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Percentage of children in foster care with more than two placements	205	53.25%	2690	55.53%

Summary: The majority of cases we reviewed had between 1 and 3 placements. In those cases with higher numbers of placements, the reason for changing placements was not generally documented clearly in the record.

Outcome 8: Increase Stability of Children's Lives

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Percentage of children who change schools/schools systems:	Of the 15 children in Foster Care who are attending school:			
Once	4(26.67%) had changed school once as the result of placement			
More than once	11(73.33%) had changed school more than once as the result of placements.			
Percentage of cases with more than one change in foster care case workers	Of the 25 cases reviewed, all had more than one change in foster care caseworkers.			

Summary: The documentation in the files reviewed did not directly address changes in schools or school districts, but review staff were able to determine from dictation those changes in schools that were recorded. All cases reviewed had more than one change in caseworkers.

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Outcome 9: Reduce/Prevent Abuse and Neglect of Children

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number and percentage of indicated cases of child abuse and/or neglect:	48	60.00%	293	46.00%
Total				
Among high-risk populations	Report under development			
Number of fatalities among children known to the agency	Reported Elsewhere			

Summary: Richland DSS has regular staffing procedures in place to address effective case decision-making. In actual practice, case decisions are usually based on a single contact with the family. As stated before, an ongoing assessment of child safety in active CPS and Foster Care cases is not clearly documented or enforced.

Outcome 10: Reduce/Prevent Recurrence of Child Abuse and Neglect

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number and percentage of cases of children with 2 nd indicated report within 12 months of the 1 st indicated report	Report under development			
Number and percentage of cases of children with 2 nd indicated report within 12 months of reunification	Report under development			

Summary: We noted that most cases reviewed had prior CPS history, either of unfounded reports, active agency involvement, or not accepted at referral. The general finding of limited contacts with families, particular CPS Treatment cases, and limited supervisory involvement are significant factors in this outcome.

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**Outcome 11: Limit the Number of Abused and/or Neglected Children
Entering Foster Care to Those Who are Truly Endangered in
Their Home**

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number and percentage of children court ordered into placement	62	16.10%	1131	23.26%
Number and percentage of children placed informally (with relatives)	5	1.30%	269	5.53%
Number and percentage of treatment cases closed with risk reduced and treatment goals achieved (i.e. parents' and children's physical/mental health and safety improved)	44	10.65%	360	7.24%

Summary: We noted a significant number of cases with children in care either returned home or placed with relatives at the probable cause or removal hearing. In these cases, it was not clear why the removal took place instead of arranging the relative placement at the initial contact. This practice of removing then returning a child is a barrier to achieving this outcome. The limited involvement of clients and service providers in the closure decision, especially with CPS Treatment, calls into question the validity of the number above.

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Outcome 12: Minimize Intrusion upon the Lives of Families and Children

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number and percentage of children and families, when asked, indicate/feel that the agency intruded in their lives:	In the client interviews conducted, all interviewees felt the involvement of the agency was an intrusion into their lives.			
Where services are provided (community based)	Interviews and case record reviews indicated the provision of services in the community and as near to the client as available.			
How we deliver services (mutual planning)	In client interviews and in case record reviews, mutual planning was not occurring.			
When services are provided (convenient hours)	Most interviews reported that it was possible to arrange convenient times for service to be provided.			
How clients were treated (respect and dignity)	Report under development			
Number of days/weeks from achievement of treatment goals to case closure in treatment cases	Report under development			

Summary: While there are regular staffings with Mental Health, the exchange of progress reports was not clearly documented. The limited involvement of clients and service providers in case planning and evaluation of case plans in terms of activities instead of behavioral change are barriers to the achievement of this outcome.

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Outcome 13: Increase Supply of Foster Home Placement Slots

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number of licensed foster home placement slots	98	100%	1695	100%
Kinship care	Report under development			
Placements that fit	Report under development			
Close to home	Report under development			

Summary: Richland DSS has procedures in place to improve support to foster parents and to determine appropriate placements for children.

Outcome 14: Increase Number of Adoptions

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number of adoptions finalized	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Summary: Not Reviewed (Separate Organization)

Outcome 15: Reduce Number of Disrupted Adoptions

Measure	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
Number of adoptions disrupted within 12 months of finalization	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Summary: Not Reviewed (Separate Organization)